

Between Spaces



**Art appreciation lessons
as a platform for intercultural exchange**

Claire Goedman and Manon Habekotté

**Lectoraat Kunsteducatie
Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten**



Summary

This design-based research project explored how an online art appreciation course can contribute to intercultural exchange processes between student art teachers from two countries: Israel and the Netherlands. The study is based on a collaboration between two Bachelor's degree programmes in Fine Art in Education, at the Faculty of Arts - Hamidrasha at Beit Berl College in Tel Aviv and the Breitner Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. Based on five design principles, an online art appreciation course was designed in which students could develop vocabulary and knowledge about each other through group and peer learning, by interpreting art in art appreciation assignments, and through collaborative practical art assignments. The course was then implemented and evaluated with all sixteen participating students: eight from each country. The students' experiences and perceived learning outcomes were evaluated by means of group interviews and learner reports. Taking the analysed data into consideration, the pedagogical design principles showed that a rich learning environment, where students work in pairs to create artworks, stimulated the mutual cultural exchange processes. Considering the content matter, the data showed that a semiotic reading of global artworks that trigger discomforting emotions, namely a pedagogy of discomfort, is key when aiming to achieve cultural awareness among participating students.

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1. Introduction



Figure 1. Abdu'Allah's, *The Last Supper II*, 2003

In May 2019, we gave a guest lecture entitled *Decolonizing the Museum* for an Erasmus+ exchange programme at the Faculty of Arts - Hamidrasha at Beit Berl College in Tel Aviv, Israel. The lecture was part of a collaboration between Hamidrasha and the Breitner Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts in the Netherlands, both of which are faculties of Arts and Education. We presumed this subject to be relevant to the Hamidrasha students as decolonisation is not only a hot topic in the Netherlands, but is also debated worldwide (Azoulay, 2019; Donszelmann, 2015; Belting, Buddensieg, Wiebel, 2013; Isking, 2017; Zijlmans, 2008; Zijlmans, 2018). Bulk (2019) describes an increasingly globalised world, in which people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds engage with each other. This is also relevant for art teacher students.

Recent decades have been characterised by an increase in networks of cultural interconnections. For instance, the Netherlands has become a 'superdiverse' (Bulk, 2019, p. 91) society, with the percentage of children under fifteen with a native Dutch background declining to just one-third of the population in recent years.

This is particularly evident in the major cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where most young people under fifteen with an immigrant background have their roots in non-Western countries (Bulk, 2019). Israel also has a highly diverse population, with both the Arab and Jewish communities coming from diverse backgrounds. According to data published on the website of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d.), 75% of the population is Jewish but from a widely diverse ethnic and cultural background, and 24% of the population is non-Jewish. Although defined collectively as Arab citizens, they include a number of different, primarily Arabic-speaking, groups, mostly Muslim but also including other groups like Druze, Circassians and others not classified by religion.

Considering the above, we decided to give a lecture about decolonisation to a group of third-year Israeli students Master's programme in Art Education. We discussed several artworks that are relevant for addressing different cultural perspectives on history, among them an example of Faisal Abdu'Allah's *The Last Supper II* (2003) (Fig. 1). In the photograph, a group of young

black people are sitting behind a table. The composition looks similar to the famous *Last Supper* (1495–98) fresco by Leonardo da Vinci, with Christ and his disciples sitting behind a table. The association seemed obvious to us, in both composition and title, but was not immediately recognised by the Israeli students. Their first association was with an artwork by the Israeli artist Adi Nes *Untitled (The Last Supper Before Going Out to Battle)*, 1999. In this photograph, a group of young Israeli soldiers sits behind a table, also in a similar composition to Da Vinci's *Last Supper*. We suspected that, since many Israelis are not familiar with the New Testament and thus the life and death of Jesus Christ, they did not make the connection in their minds. Even though these students are familiar with Leonardo da Vinci's fresco and did recognise the compositional comparison after we mentioned it, they still did not easily tune into the underlying biblical interpretation of Abdu'Allah's *The Last Supper II* and the discussion on colonial history addressed by the work.

This experience underlines that views on the interpretation of art are influenced by the viewers' cultural backgrounds. Even though students are familiar with the Western canon of art history, it does not necessarily mean that interpretation is made from a mutual point of view when looking at art. We wondered whether, if students with different cultural backgrounds were to work together on art appreciation assignments, the discussion about interpreting the meaning of artworks could also fuel aspects of intercultural learning, for instance, increasing cultural awareness. Donszelmann (2015) has shown in her research that discussing postcolonialism through art and literature is relevant in curricula, especially when students' own experiential backgrounds and cultural perspectives are discussed. In this way, ideas and debates can be tested safely with some critical distance, thus contributing to students' learning and eventually their professional context. If students from different cultural backgrounds were to work together on art appreciation assignments, the discussion about interpreting the meaning of artworks could also fuel aspects of intercultural learning, such as becoming more culturally aware. Thus, by discussing the

cultural understandings and misunderstandings triggered by contemporary art, this could contribute to intercultural competences of future art teachers – much needed in the multicultural environment in which they will work.

We decided to develop a plan to investigate this in the form of a design-based research project in collaboration with our colleagues from Hamidrasha. The central object of research was an online art appreciation course in which student art teachers from Tel Aviv and Amsterdam would participate. During the online course, students would collectively discuss contemporary artworks and work on different assignments in intercultural pairs. The artworks and assignments should be selected and designed carefully, so that the interpretation from a cultural point of view could become a topic in the students' conversations. The aim of the project is to research to what extent an intercultural art appreciation course can make students aware of intercultural understandings and misunderstandings and may support their preparation to teach in intercultural environments.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this research project was to design an online art appreciation course that stimulates intercultural exchange between students from two countries. The course's digital online platform was used as an intercultural space, so that student art teachers from different cultural backgrounds develop vocabulary and knowledge about each other through peer learning, by interpreting art in art appreciation assignments and by collaborating in art assignments.

2.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Which design principles are needed for the pedagogy and the content matter of an online intercultural art appreciation course?

What are the participants' experiences and perceived learning outcomes with the design principles of the online intercultural art appreciation course?

2.2 DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT

This is a design-based research project, which uses research-based solutions for complex problems in educational practices (Plomp & Nieveen, 2009). Specifically, we used the design-based model of Heijnen (2018), which identifies four phases: the identification phase, the design phase, the test and evaluation phase and, finally, the reflection phase (Fig. 2).

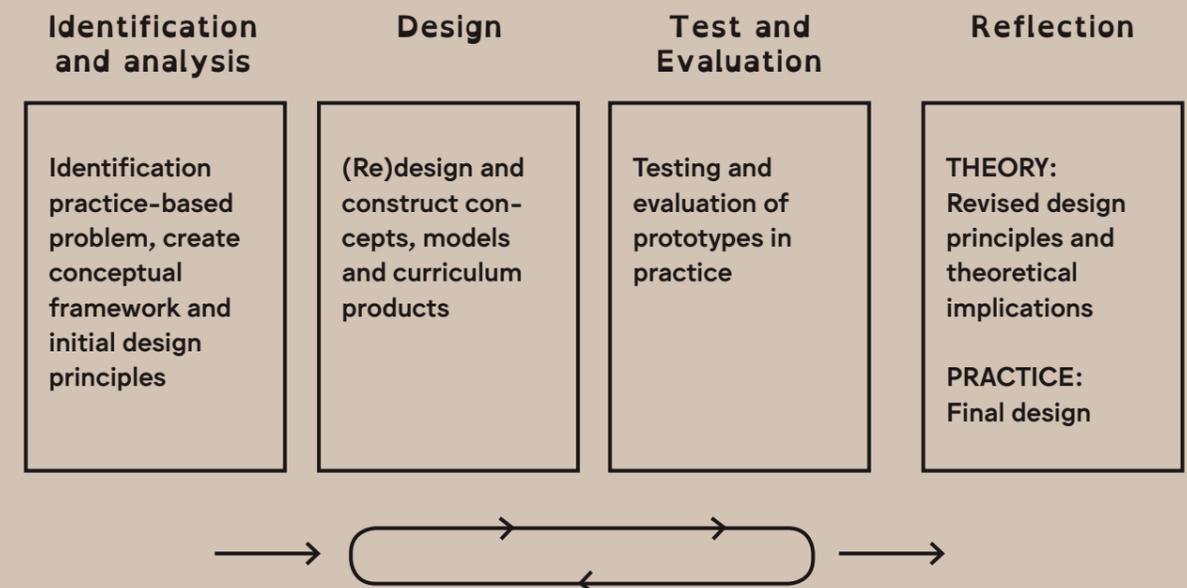


Figure 2. Heijnen's model (2018)

In the *identification phase*, we constructed a theoretical framework and provisional design principles. In the *design phase*, the participating teachers developed a course of four online lessons via video meetings. We operationalised the design principles into content and learning objectives and appropriated didactic methods for each lesson. In the *test and evaluation phase*, we executed our course via an online platform with students from each faculty and evaluated it afterwards. The execution and evaluation of the course took place between March and April 2021.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS

The aim of this project was to create a collaboration that is to be executed in an intercultural environment in which students are in their own country and meet virtually. To do so, the following collaboration was created between:

- The Breitner Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts offers a Bachelor's degree programme in Fine Art in Education with different subjects including painting, sculpture, photography, new media and design. Students also develop an extensive knowledge of the history of arts and culture, as well as teaching methods for particular target groups, educational theory and cultural and artistic training.
- The Faculty of Arts - Hamidrasha at Beit Berl College is a leading school of arts in Israel for art education, painting, sculpture, photography, video art, digital media and film. Integrated with their art studies, students prepare themselves to teach art in Israeli schools, allowing Hamidrasha students to participate in culture both as active artists and as art teachers.

We wanted to work with a balanced number of students from each faculty and decided on eight, sixteen students in total. Selection was based on the following criteria: students had to write and read English at B2 level, as this would be the language to communicate in during the course. We wanted an even male/female ratio and therefore selected four Israeli male students and four Israeli female students and two Dutch male students and six Dutch female students. Participating students were between 19 and 32 years of age.

Within the context of this research design we had dual roles as teachers and researchers. We designed and executed the course together with two teachers of the Faculty of Arts – Hamidrasha at Beit Berl College. Dr. Vered Heruti has a doctorate in visual culture, teaches at Hamidrasha and works at a secondary school as an art teacher. Orly Sever is an artist, teacher and head of the educational department at Hamidrasha.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

For our first research question: *Which design principles are needed for the content matter and pedagogy of an online intercultural art appreciation course?* we researched relevant theory to define clear design principles on which the course would be based, namely; global art, global culture, art appreciation and pedagogy. In parallel with this, we organised four online video meetings with our Israeli colleagues between September 2020 and March 2021. In these meetings we worked out the learning objectives and decided on theory and content for each lesson. We worked in a shared document in which the details of each lesson were documented so that we all had the same information and clear knowledge of every update. Designing the lessons continued while the course was being conducted, and between each lesson we decided on final adjustments for the next lesson. In this way we also collected fieldnotes on the process.

For our second research question: *What are the participants' experiences and perceived learning outcomes with the design principles of the online intercultural art appreciation course?* we prepared a learner report that students were asked to fill in at the end of the course. A learner report is an open self-evaluation method allowing learners to describe what they learned or how they experienced an educational project or curriculum (De Groot, 1980). The open format of a learner report also enables the participating students to report unexpected or unintended learning outcomes (Van Kesteren, 1993). Students filled in the learner reports (Appendix 1) digitally and anonymously and answered the following two questions: "what learning experiences did you have in this course?" and "what did you learn about yourself in this course?" Within these categories we formulated examples of sentences that

students could use to formulate their learning statements, such as "I experienced that ..." and "I was surprised by..." We also asked eight closed questions concerning the goals of the lessons, which students could answer on a four-point, forced Likert scale from double minus – "don't agree at all" to double plus "totally agree".

After the course ended, we conducted a semi-structured one-hour online interview with the students about their experiences in this course. We decided to do the interviews in two groups, the Israeli students with the Israeli teachers and the Dutch students with the Dutch teachers. We presumed that this way students would not be hindered by a language barrier and would be able to answer more openly about participating and working with the students from the other country. The interview topics were derived from the design principles: *global culture*, meaning working and creating together in an intercultural student/teacher group, *global artworks* and *art appreciation activities*, the topics for the lessons in the pilot course.

2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The answers to the open questions from the learner reports were analysed deductively, in categories derived from the design principles. The online open interviews were recorded on video, transcribed and analysed. The transcript of the interviews with the Israeli students was translated into English by a professional translator. The analyses of the interview transcripts were based on open thematic coding (Boeije, 2016) according to the categories derived from the design principles. Labels assigned were: *art appreciation learning activities*, *art assignment learning activities*, *global artworks*, *art theory* and *learning experiences about cultural concepts* (Appendix 2). In the *reflection phase*, the results from the test and evaluation phase were evaluated and we reconsidered the design principles for future projects with the same setting.

2.6 QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

Credibility and validity in this study was obtained by method triangulation. The data from the learner reports and interviews were cross-examined to

check whether the results matched. Procedural reliability was achieved by the use of primary data, such as quotes from the interview transcripts and from the learner reports. Finally, the ethical aspects of this research project were secured by informing the participating teachers and students on the goals and process of this research project beforehand. They all agreed to participate by signing a consent form.

3. Identification phase

In this chapter, we will explain the theory that led to our design principles. Design principles are used as a guide to the content and pedagogical strategies of our online intercultural art reception course. We will introduce them one by one together with the theory on which they are based.

3.1 THE FIRST AND SECOND DESIGN PRINCIPLES: CO-TEACHING AND PEER LEARNING

In many countries it has become an educational objective to effectively engage in meaningful and enriching interaction with people from different cultures (Pachova & Carbó, 2019). A number of cases have been published in art education. For instance, the 2019 ENO Yearbook was dedicated to *Arts and Cultural Education in a World of Diversity* (Ferro et al., 2019). It provides an analysis of cultural diversity in contemporary societies in Europe due to postcolonial processes, mass migration, multi-ethnicity and other factors. This challenges traditional ways of understanding culture. The book states that where cultures merge, tensions or conflict arise, but that creativity and hybrid cultures are also generated. The edited volume shows many approaches to multicultural education and intercultural learning within arts and cultural education practices. A good example is a two-year project in a school in Catalonia, Spain with a high level of cultural diversity among the pupil population. The pupils made art together focusing on cultural expression, which enhanced cultural awareness in the whole group (Pachova & Carbó, 2019). Much of the research on intercultural art education describes projects that aim to contribute to both the appreciation of cultural diversity and the affirmation of national identity (Bulk, 2019; Donszelmann, 2015; Pachova and Carbó, 2019). Many of these projects are conducted in one country or even in one school, whereas our course specifically deals with

intercultural exchange between groups in different countries.

The *Opleidingsprofielen kunstvakdocenten-opleidingen* (Qualifications Frameworks for Art Education Programmes) (KVDO, 2018), which defines the competencies that every Dutch arts teacher should develop during their Bachelor's degree programme, states that cultural awareness is an important skill for future art teachers and should be part of their teacher training curriculum. Student teachers need to develop cultural self-knowledge and perspectives of 'the other' so that students learn how to address this in their profession. They should also be prepared to use this knowledge strategically in order to be flexible and respectful in terms of the different responsibilities, concerns and capacities regarding their future profession.

To create an environment in which students increase their cultural awareness, the mutual exchange between Dutch and Israeli students could be emphasised through peer learning. Topping (2005) stated that peer learning can be defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions" (p. 631). The advantage of peer learning is that feelings of self-disclosure or incompetency are more easily talked about between peers because there is no authority relationship. Another advantage is that peers share collective knowledge and different perspectives more freely (Bremmer & Van Hoek, 2020).

Additionally, we chose to work together with the Israeli teachers as an international

team. Collaboration between teachers is called co-teaching and is explained by Aldabas (2018) who noted that collaboration often occurs between a generalist and a specialist teacher. They combine their knowledge so that students can learn from two (or more) perspectives what would lead to enhancement of student performance. In our case, we have four teachers with different perspectives (art theory and art teachers) working and teaching together. By creating an intercultural environment where students and teachers from different countries and cultures work together online, we aim to give the participating students and teachers the opportunity to further develop their intercultural competences. This leads to the first two design principles: *Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties from at least two different countries, in which teachers work together as a team.* And: *Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties, where students from two different countries work in pairs and engage in peer learning.*

3.2 THE THIRD DESIGN PRINCIPLE: LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP CULTURAL AWARENESS

According to Koot & Urlus (2002), cultural awareness is developed when there is an understanding of 'oneself' and of 'the other'. They developed lessons that can be used for art education in primary and secondary schools with a culturally diverse population. These lessons used guided didactic conversations and art assignments in collaboration, linked to specific topics, such as how students would act in a certain situation, thus putting an emphasis on similarities and differences. Their didactic methods were aimed at cooperation and creating together in order to achieve an exchange of personal viewpoints.

Holmberg (1983) characterised guided conversations in his research on distance learning. He gave six characteristics with which, even with physical distance, the learning experience can feel personal, helping to engage the student with the assignment. The characteristics of Holmberg's guided didactic conversations are:

- Easily accessible presentations and study matter.

- Explicit advice and suggestions to the student.
- Invitations to an exchange of views.
- Attempts to involve the student emotionally.
- Including personal style of the teacher.
- Demarcation between themes, statements and voices. (Holmberg, 1983 p. 3)

In order to engage a student in conversations, we could use "invitations to an exchange of views" and "attempts to involve the student emotionally" to help the student develop cultural awareness. For making art in collaboration, "easily accessible presentations and study matter" would be important.

As group discussions are an important aspect of art appreciation, it is also useful to have some guidelines for talking about art. Terry Barret (2004) provides tools to improve the quantity and quality of students' discussions about art, mainly in a group setting. This includes having clear rules like: no side-conversations, one person speaks at a time, the others listen, and limit comments to one thought at a time. The teacher asks simple open questions like: "Who can add to her thought?" (p. 2), "What does someone else see?" (p. 3), "What does this [work] mean to me [you]?", and "What does this [work] mean to the artist?" (p. 4).

To help student art teachers develop cultural awareness of oneself' and of 'the other,' we choose didactics that enhance exchange of personal experiences and thought, and create work in collaboration. We will do this by talking about and reflecting on global art and culture and making artworks in collaboration. Specifically, we will use open questions so that the students can share their thoughts, experiences, descriptions, interpretations and meanings with each other. In this way, students can exchange personal and cultural concepts. Thus, the third design principle is: *Create learning activities based on guided conversation, group discussions and making artworks in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness.*

3.3 THE FOURTH DESIGN PRINCIPLE: GLOBAL CULTURE AND GLOBAL ART

The first three principles all have to do with the pedagogical strategies and didactics of the course. The next step is to look into the content matter needed for the course, which will be discussed in this section.

When designing a model for a course using an online platform, where students from different cultural backgrounds living in different countries talk about global art and culture and collaborate in art assignments, ‘global art and culture’ need to be defined. Steger (2018) noted that the definition of globalisation seems to be contaminated by a variety of interpretations by different authors. We will first define globalisation in order to come to a definition of ‘global art and culture’.

The general term ‘global’ is contracted from globalisation and is difficult to describe because it suggests a consensus, as if global means that everyone in the world agrees and is connected. But global and thus globalisation are not homogeneous. According to Steger (2018), globalisation is used in both the popular press and academic literature without a clear definition and is assigned in many meanings, such as a process, a condition, a system, or even a force. This is contradictory because globalisation cannot be a process and a condition at the same time. To come to a clear meaning, Steger distinguishes between three related terms. The first is global as a social condition, characterised by tight global economic, political, cultural and environmental interconnections. The second is global imaginary, which is people’s growing consciousness of this increasing globality. And finally, Steger says, “globalisation refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space.” (p. 17) So, the core of globalisation is about shifting forms of human contact in a growing worldwide interconnectivity.

The idea of a global culture is linked to identity, as researched by Smith (1990), who questioned which memories, myths and symbols constitute a global culture. He asserts that there are no ‘world memories’ that can be used to *unite* humanity as a collective identity. Imagery and culture are always historically specific because they are based on shared local memories and a sense of continuity between generations in a certain time and place. This is consistent with UNESCO’s definition of culture as a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001). This

means that culture is strongly shared by specific groups of people.

From the explanation above based on UNESCO and Steger, global culture can be defined as a social process of interconnectivity and growing consciousness about distinctive culturally-related topics that transform the present social condition worldwide. Additionally, global art can then be defined as contemporary art that addresses a range of subjects many people can relate to or understand and is presented on a global platform such as international exhibitions and biennales. The latter is important because, over the past twenty years, there has been a shift of focus in art history and the subjects it addresses, often challenging world views and dominant beliefs. For instance, the so-called ‘Western dominant (white male) perspective’ is no longer the only narrative. Elkins (2006) and Zijlmans and Van Damme (2008) have made it clear that the world is globally more aware and that the arts are letting go of the old systems and embracing a new world view, “in addition to [the study of art] becoming more global and multidisciplinary” (Zijlmans & Van Damme, 2008, p. 55). As artists increasingly operate on an international scale and often have hybrid identities due to ancient and modern diaspora, colonisation, contemporary economic/political movement of people and travel, as well as the use of digital devices to connect to people all over the globe, viewers from around the world are asked to understand different works of art that react to these aspects of globalisation (Williamson, 2019). According to Williamson (2019), contemporary art can enable us to see the world from the perspectives of others and understand stories and histories from other parts of the world, because it addresses stories and memories from around the world. Art museums, galleries and biennales are joining this new perspective on contemporary art by selecting artists and artworks that represent a broader range of forms, narratives and cultures from what we have seen since postmodernism. The selection of artworks we would like to use in this course would have to be linked to the definition of global culture and global art as stated above. Thus, the artworks need to be contemporary, presented in international contexts and contain personal stories or local memories.

Porto and Zembylas (2020) state that “the arts, in particular, are conducive to offering

productive ways of handling the emotional responses, [like discussions] that are elicited by difficult issues” (2020, p. 359). This means that interpreting artworks can lead to discussions in the classroom about sensitive topics, for instance identity and race. Preferably, artworks regarding historical, political and/or personal stories can be used to talk about dominant beliefs in a safe manner. A good example of this is the Venice Biennale in 2019. With the theme ‘May You Live in Interesting Times’ the art manifestation invited countries and artists to start a dialogue ‘without boundaries’ about global tendencies. The Dutch pavilion was curated by Benno Tempel who chose the work of Iris Kensmil and Remy Jungerman because both artists grew up in the Netherlands and have Surinamese heritage (Smallegange, 2019). The Netherlands and Suriname are connected through their colonial history. For example, for the Dutch Pavilion, Jungerman created *Promise IV* and *Visiting Deities*, which he sees as a work influenced by a combination of traditional Surinamese Maroon design, the traditional Winti religion and the formal Dutch art legacy of *De Stijl* (Jungerman, 2019). The works seem to connect the two countries and open up discussions on colonial legacy.

Talking about difficult topics like this is defined by Porto and Zembylas as a ‘pedagogy of discomfort’. They understand this as a “pedagogical framework that engages students and teachers with difficult issues by troubling the participants’ emotional comfort zones” (Porto & Zembylas, 2020, p. 359). This pedagogical approach is grounded in the assumption that discomforting emotions are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain stereotypes and social injustices, and in creating openings for empathy, solidarity and transformation (Porto & Zembylas, 2020). Thus, artworks that are used for art reception assignments in this course should appeal to these discomforts and stir the dominant beliefs of the viewer. This leads to our fourth design principle: *For art appreciation assignments, use contemporary global artworks that contain personal stories or local memories, which may trigger feelings of discomfort.*

3.4 THE FIFTH DESIGN PRINCIPLE: SEMIOTIC READING

If we use artworks for art reception assignments to trigger emotions and open up discussions, we need a tool that allows personal interpretation when analysing artworks. The connection between association and meaning of what we see is described by Sturken and Cartwright (2018) as “a critical understanding and interpretation of the codes, meanings, rights, and limits that make images and looking practices matter in our encounters in the world” (p. 2). This can be achieved by the use of linguistic semiotics, which provides a method for interpreting these codes, meanings and rights from different parts of the world. To understand how this works, we have to understand how semiotics works.

According to Daniel Chandler (2017), a semiotician at Aberystwyth University, the shortest definition of semiotics is that it is the study of signs. Not just visual signs like road signs, but also drawings, paintings, photographs, words, sounds and body language. The study of signs is part of philosophy and goes back to ancient times, already mentioned by Plato (c. 360 BCE). Contemporary semiotics is both a linguistic and a philosophical tradition, developed mainly by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Interestingly, both placed signs in a system with a reference to society. We understand the meaning of signs by relating them to our way of living within our culture or subculture. For instance, apart from being a red light, a red traffic light means that we must stop. A further association of this sign is that the crossing could be dangerous, so stopping is safer. A green light means go or that it is safe to go.

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) developed a method of unravelling cultural myths based on the ideas of earlier thinkers. His method separates levels of meaning into denotation and connotation levels (Braembussche, 2007). Denotations with a series of connotations work as interrelated sets of binary oppositions underlying symbolic codes. Chandler (2017) states that denotation involves a broader consensus so that the meaning of a sign would be broadly agreed upon by members of the same culture. Connotational meaning, on the other hand, is never complete. Connotations are looser and more subtle. They are more ambiguous but also

widely recognised within a culture. For Barthes, myth is the hidden set of rules and conventions through which meanings specific to certain groups are made to seem natural, universal and a given for a society as a whole. Myth allows the connotative meaning of a particular thing or image to appear as denotative, literal or natural (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018). Cultures try to account for contradictions by creating myths (Lévi Strauss cited by Chandler, 2017). Brand myths, for example, are typical for cultural myths. A brand myth is a belief by consumers that the brand offers them a way of resolving a problem or situation (Valentine n.d., cited by Chandler, 2017). To explore the meaning of images is to recognise that they are produced within the dynamics of social power and ideology. Images are an important site through which ideologies, as systems of belief, are produced (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018).

Interestingly, both Hamidrasha and the Breitner Academy discuss the theory of semiotics as part of their curriculum in various courses. This opens up possibilities for our four online lessons in which we have students work together and talk about global art. Artworks will be regarded as signs that have codes, which can be interpreted to understand the meaning within the social and cultural context, place and time of the artwork. We presume that the meaning of artworks is derived from the cultural and the social context of the artist and that we, the viewers, can understand these codes by interpreting them. According to Sturken and Cartwright (2019), we actually do this automatically all the time, without realising it. But in our lessons, we will do this openly by using Terry Barret's way of discussing with using open questions. Our open questions will focus on mentioning what the students see and on mentioning what associations the students have with what they see. Through these associations, which are placed in a social and cultural context, we will interpret the meaning of the artworks. This approach is regarded by Sturken and Cartwright as a way to develop critical thinking, interpretation and analysis. Actively engaging in discussion and exchange of thought can provide students with multiple and many-sided opportunities to get to know themselves better (Barrett, 2020, p. xiv), thus to better understand both their own backgrounds and those of the other students.

Since semiotics is taught in both academies and is a clear method of interpreting artworks, it can be used in our online course as a tool in combination with open questioning. The fifth design principle will be: *Use a visual semiotic reading with open questions as a tool for interpreting artworks in art appreciation assignments.*

3.5 THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Based on our research question: *Which design principles are needed for the pedagogy and content matter of an online intercultural art appreciation course?*, we formulated the following design principles for our course:

Pedagogical strategies

- *Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties from at least two different countries, in which teachers work together as a team.*
- *Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties where students from two different countries work in pairs and engage in peer learning.*
- *Create learning activities based on guided conversation, group discussions and making artworks in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness.*

Content matter

- *For art appreciation assignments, use contemporary global artworks that contain personal stories or local memories, which may trigger feelings of discomfort.*
- *Use a visual semiotic reading with open questions as a tool for interpreting artworks in art appreciation assignments.*

4. Design phase

This chapter explains the design process. First, the general outline of the course is explained, after which the design process is laid out according to our design principles based on the pedagogy and content of the course.

4.1 GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE ONLINE INTERCULTURAL ART APPRECIATION COURSE

Based on the design principles, we shaped the pedagogy and content matter of the online course with our Israeli colleagues Vered Heruti and Orly Sever via video calls. The course's learning community was formed by sixteen Dutch and Israeli third-year Bachelor's students of art education. The group of Dutch students were taking this course as an alternative route within an existing course at the Breitner Academy, called Global Art. For the Israeli students, participation would be voluntary, as there was no course to embed the pilot in. The online course consisted of four two-and-a-half-hour lessons plus homework assignments, with a total study load of 28 hours (one European Credit).

The learning objectives for our course were:

1. the student can discuss personal cultural concepts in relation to contemporary global art.
2. the student can explore the concept of cultural similarities and differences.
3. the student can interpret contemporary global art by using semiotics.
4. the student can discuss the cultural concept of space in relation to public space.
5. the student can create artworks in pairs and publish the results on Padlet.

The online platform Microsoft Teams was chosen for the lessons because the Breitner Academy had made Microsoft Teams mandatory for all online lessons. Microsoft Teams would serve as a meeting place and a virtual classroom. The site Padlet.

com was added for presentations because it is an easy platform on which to post ideas and pictures, has a clear layout and can be used as a presentation board or wall. It could also be integrated into Microsoft Teams via a link. Both Israeli and Dutch students were already familiar with Padlet.

4.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE LESSONS ACCORDING TO THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties from at least two different countries, in which teachers work together as a team.

Besides developing the course as an international teaching team, it was also important for us to engage in team teaching. This made it clear to the students that the four of us were equally involved in the course. For each topic, one of us would take the lead, supported by the other three. This meant that we had a shared responsibility in the pedagogical process.

Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties where students from two different countries work in pairs and engage in peer learning.

The eight students from each faculty would be paired up, with one Dutch and one Israeli student in each pair, to create fixed collaboration pairs for the duration of the course. Since we wanted them not only to talk about art, but also to create artworks, we thought working in pairs would make the students engage with each other more and make the working process easier for them. The choice for pairs was a practical decision

in the sense that we only had four lessons and wanted the students to get to know each other well. The didactic idea behind the pairs was that working with one partner could lead to a safe environment in which students were able to have uncomfortable discussions and make experimental works of art.

Create learning activities based on guided conversation, group discussions and making artworks in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness.

Our learning objectives were based on the following learning activities: guided conversations, discussions and creating artworks together. The content of these learning activities would be contemporary global art and the concept of space. As stated above, the discussions would focus on interpreting contemporary art by using Roland Barthes' theory on semiotic association.

Because Vered and Orly are art teachers, they proposed having students make artworks together, which would then be exhibited in an online exhibition in Padlet in the final lesson. Having the students make works of art together in addition to the discussions was an opportunity for them to connect on a deeper personal level, which might lead to more meaningful discussions about cultural concepts. Consequently, we needed a second theoretical basis to connect the semiotic reading of art to the making of artworks.

Our Israeli colleagues suggested a text by Walter Benjamin to inspire the making process of the collaborating pairs. We therefore added Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, first published in 1982. This text is all about the individual pondering and observation of the space he walks through. It takes the reader on a walk with Walter Benjamin as he meanders through the shopping arcades of Paris. Benjamin considered these spaces, specifically built for the consumer, to be the most important architectural form of the nineteenth century. In the text, he takes the role of a flâneur or wanderer through the arcades and talks about his associations and thoughts, which extend from literary and philosophical subjects to political, economic and technological considerations. The text reads as a collection of thoughts without direct explanation or analysis triggered by his wanderings through the city space.

The concept of space could therefore be a starting point for our students, as it is an open word

that can be explained philosophically and physically. Space also connects to the overarching intercultural theme of the course: space is the place where we all are, even online. Space is also the place where we interact with each other, our culture, our habitat and where we do what we do. This meant that space could also be used to talk about semiotic associations and specifically the cultural interpretation of semiotic readings in artworks.

For art appreciation assignments, use contemporary global artworks that contain personal stories or local memories, which may trigger feelings of discomfort.

Since we wanted the artworks we used for discussions to trigger discomforting emotions via a personal story or local memory from the viewer's perspective, we needed them to spark discussions. We chose artworks that focus on historical and cultural events or rituals like Erez Israeli's *Friday Night* (2009), Hans Op de Beeck's *Celebration* (2008) and Ilya Kabakov's *The Toilet* (1992). All three artworks have a table set in a space as a narrative in the work (see Figs. 4, 5, 6). We also chose to discuss the work of Forensic Architecture, an interdisciplinary research group led by architect Eyal Weizman, based at Goldsmiths, University of London. Forensic Architecture uses media, architectural techniques and technologies to investigate cases of state violence and violations of human rights around the world. With regard to the space theme, Manon proposed using the videos of Francis Aljys, as they would be an interesting means to talk about and interpret Benjamin's text and talk about personal and public space. Orly also proposed making a presentation with contemporary artists using public space in their artworks, like Hamish Fulton and Christie Blizard.

Use a visual semiotic reading with open questions to interpret artworks as a tool for interpreting artworks in art appreciation assignments

As Sturken and Cartwright (2018) have indicated, when using global artworks to talk about students' myths and memories, we need to do so with a semiotic reading embedded in learning activities, like guided conversations. The learning activities in each lesson are outlined in Fig. 3. The focus of each lesson is to use guided conversations and discussions when looking at art and to talk about semiotic associations that occur while talking together.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	LESSON 1 ACTIVITIES	LESSON 2 ACTIVITIES	LESSON 3 ACTIVITIES	LESSON 4 ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The students can discuss personal cultural concepts in relation to contemporary global art (1) – The students can explore the concept of cultural similarities and differences (2) – The students can interpret contemporary global art by using semiotics (3) – The students can discuss the cultural concept of space in relation to public space (4) – The students can create artworks in pairs and publish the results on Padlet (5) 	<p>Homework before first lesson: Upload 2 photos – one of their personal space and one of a public space – along with their name, to the Padlet wall before 2 March 2021.</p> <p>Start exploring public and private spaces by means of photos shared on Padlet, and becoming aware of a cultural identity. (2)</p> <p>Guided conversation/semiotic reading (Vered) about the interpretations of three artworks (Israeli, Op de Beeck, Kabakov). All artworks have a table as their main subject. (1)</p>	<p>Discussion of homework: How did their experience of getting lost relate to the text (Benjamin) they have read? (2)(4)</p> <p>Discussion of W. Benjamin's <i>The Arcades Project</i> and connecting this to student works and global artworks. (Vered) (1)</p> <p>Guided conversation/semiotic reading on the work of Francis Aljys taking in mind 'space' and referring to Benjamin. (Manon) (3) (4)</p> <p>Student discussion in smaller breakout groups of four: Present your associations and explain what you see in the different artworks. Ask the other students questions about their associations and interpretations. (3) (4)</p> <p>Group discussion: Share what was noticed and learned in breakout rooms. (2) (3) (4)</p>	<p>Interpreting global artworks: A presentation of contemporary artist who work with the concept of walking in public spaces (Manon/Orly). A group discussion follows with a focus on 'space' as a cultural identity. (1) (2) (3) (4)</p> <p>In breakout rooms: Each pair shares what they have done this week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What rules did you give each other? – How did it connect to the text of Benjamin? (1) (2) (3) (4) <p>Group discussion on the work of Forensic Architecture (Manon): How does this method of visual research relate to the subjects discussed and relate to your work on Padlet so far? (3) (4)</p>	<p>Reflection on student final artworks presented in an online exhibition on Padlet. Each pair of students gives a short presentation, students and teachers ask questions on their choices and artistic cooperation (8 pairs; 15 minutes per pair.) (5)</p> <p>Online opening of the exhibition on Padlet.</p>
	<p>Homework: Read from the text by Benjamin and go and get lost somewhere (take visual notes, videos, photographs, etc.).</p>	<p>Homework: In breakout rooms in pairs, give each other 'rules' for the homework assignment taking each other on a walk in your area.</p>	<p>Homework: Create a virtual final artwork in pairs, based on your personal archives on Padlet.</p>	

Figure 3. Outline of the learning activities in each lesson.

5. Test and evaluation phase

In this chapter, we discuss the process of the pilot course of four on-line lessons. Based on our notes, we will provide an overview of each lesson and a short evaluation of its implementation. After that, we will evaluate the results of the collected data.

5.1. LESSON 1

The focus of the first lesson was on exploring the meaning of the word 'space'. Students introduced themselves by means of a post on Padlet, with a photo of a personal space and a photo of a public space, and we talked about the significance of spaces by discussing several global artworks. The photos the students had uploaded to Padlet were meant as a starting point for collecting material for the artworks they would make in this course and as a basis for discussion. Global artworks were used for the introduction of an art appreciation assignment on interpreting the artworks. We chose works that use space to emphasise historical or cultural events, and that contain personal stories or local memories. These included Erez Israeli's *Friday Night* (2009), Hans Op de Beeck's *Celebration* (2008) and Ilya Kabakov's *The Toilet* (1992). All three artworks have a table as a narrative in the work (see Figs. 4, 5, 6).

The students were asked to interpret the meaning of these artworks. This involved a semi-otic reading of pictures and linking the interpretation thereof to cultural backgrounds. Students were asked open questions to help them associate meanings with the artworks. For instance, Erez Israeli's work *Friday Night* (Fig. 4) in particular triggered differences in interpretation. The Dutch students pondered on objects they recognised in the image. One student mentioned that the tablecloth reminded her of her grandparents' house, while another mentioned that the chandelier reminded her of dining out in a fancy restaurant. The Dutch students in particular were puzzled by the train running along the table or the fact that no one was present. They did not refer to the title *Friday Night*, or to Jewish religious customs, but they did interpret the table, with plates and food, as a situation where something

might have happened to prevent people from attending. Naturally, the Jewish students, who were asked to react after the Dutch students, immediately interpreted the set table as a Friday night Shabbat, and the train symbolising the deportation of Jews to concentration camps in World War II as the reason why no one was present. We discussed the other photos of global artworks in a similar way, but they did not have as great an effect on showing cultural differences in interpretation.

After a short break, the student pairs, each consisting of one Israeli and one Dutch student, went to separate breakout rooms where they were asked to discuss in a similar way the photos of a public and a personal space they had posted on Padlet (an assignment they had received before the course). Students were asked to compare these spaces and tell each other about the spaces they had posted personally. We concluded the lesson with the entire group of students, with each pair summarising the discussion they had in the breakout rooms.



Figure 4. Erez Israeli, *Friday Night*, 2009. *Friday Night* is a video sculpture of a table set for a family celebrating the Jewish Friday night Shabbat, which starts after sunset and celebrates the day of rest. On the table, a train runs along, symbolising the deportation of Jews to camps during World War II. This explains why the family is not present.



Figure 5. Hans Op de Beeck, *Celebration*, 2008. This video is part of a series entitled *Celebration Chronicles* with each video depicting a festively set table in different places. Here the scene was shot in the mountains of Arizona, with a wedding table attended by a retinue of service staff, waiting for the celebration. Everyone is anticipating the festivities, but they never start. The viewer also waits for the action as time passes, indicated by slight movements in the video like the fluttering tablecloth.



Figure 6. Ilya Kabakov, *The Toilet*, 1992. Installation built for Documenta IX. It is an almost exact copy of toilets built in the 1960s and 1970s in the Soviet Union. The building looks filthy and neglected from the outside, but inside, next to the toilets is a Soviet two-room apartment. The men's toilet is the living room and the women's toilet is the bedroom. The normality of private life is integrated into a public toilet area.

5.2 LESSON 2

The main subjects of the second lesson were the text of *The Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin and the concept of ‘space’. As a homework assignment before the lesson, students had to read an excerpt of this text alongside a second assignment in which they had to “try to get lost in their own city or area by walking.” Material such as photos of this walk had to be posted on Padlet prior to the lesson.

The lesson started with the students in breakout rooms, discussing the material they had collected on their walks and looking for a link between the material on Padlet and Benjamin’s text. When they returned to the main space in Teams, the students listened to an introduction and explanation of Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project*. Here, they could also ask questions about the text and reflect on excerpts that appealed to them.

After a short break, there was an assignment with a semiotic reading of videos by Francis Alÿs. The pairs went into breakout rooms again, watched a video that was posted online and wrote down associations they had during the discussion together. When the students returned to the main space, there was a guided talk about these videos. The students answered questions about the associative meaning they had with the different videos, and whether they could recognise Benjamin’s text in the way the videos were shot. The video *Sometimes Doing is Undoing and Sometimes Undoing is Doing* (Fig. 9) set in Afghanistan, in which two soldiers disassemble and assemble their rifles, was frequently taken as an example of associative meaning because cultural differences could easily be pointed out in this video. Differences were “going into service in the army,” as, unlike the Israeli students, the Dutch students are not required to enter military service, and the “desert-like setting” of the video, with students recognising the landscape according to where they live.

The video *Samples II* (Fig. 10) is set in London, where Alÿs makes music by rattling a drumstick along fences as he walks past was also frequently mentioned. It was connected to the text by Benjamin as a poetic awareness in a public space. Interestingly, the students reacted verbally in the discussion and in the Teams chat option. This happened often in all the four lessons. For comments on the works of Alÿs, see Fig. 7.

The lesson concluded with homework: the students had to take each other on a walk, each in their own area and give each other rules to follow. For instance, they could tell their partner to walk in a certain direction or focus on colours or shapes. During the walk, they collected material in the form of recordings, drawings, photographs or routes on Google Maps, and posted it on Padlet. Students were also asked to react to each other’s posts, not verbally but artistically, through photographs, drawings or other images as in the example in Fig. 8 in which a pair of students decided to send each other pictures of the sky every hour for a total of 24 hours.

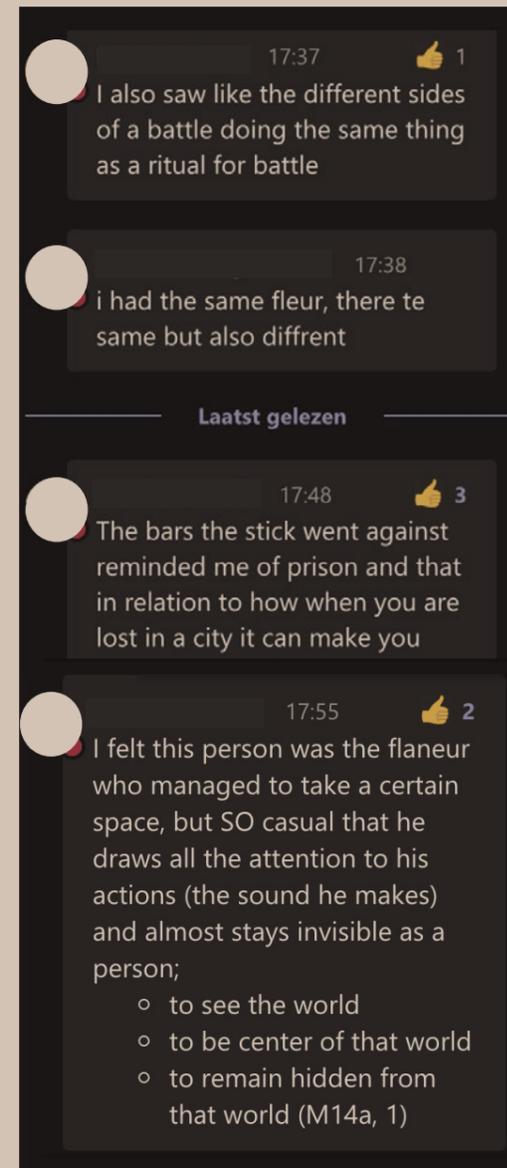


Figure 7. Example of students using the chat function during Lesson 2.

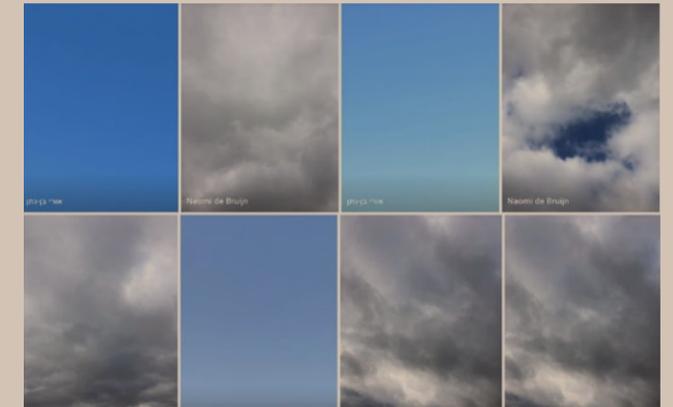


Figure 8. Example of students reacting to each other’s work and posting it on Padlet.



Figure 9. Francis Alÿs, video still of *Paradox of Praxis no. 4 (Sometimes Doing is Undoing and Sometimes Undoing is Doing)*, 2013. A split screen video of two people, Ajmal Maiwandi and a soldier from the UK Forces, disassembling and assembling their rifles in Afghanistan.



Figure 10. Francis Alÿs, *Samples II*, 2004
Video of Alÿs walking down a street in London, letting a drumstick rattle along a fence.



Figure 11. Student work in response to an upload to Padlet from her collaborative partner.



Figure 13. Hamish Fulton, *Walking Journey*, 2002
Fulton makes art that is a direct result of his walks. Although only Fulton experiences the walk itself, the texts and photographs he presents in the exhibition allow the viewer to engage with his experience.



Figure 12. Francis Alÿs, *Fairy Tales*, 1995
This video is part of a series in which Francis Alÿs walks while his sweater unravels.



Figure 14. *Forensic Architecture*, Research project about the 2014 Gaza bombing.
After the abduction of an Israeli soldier and the bombardment of Rafah by the Israeli military on 1 August 2014, Amnesty International and Forensic Architecture investigated the impact of the attack on the area. Because they were denied entry into Gaza, they used thousands of images and videos shared online or sent directly to Forensic Architecture by citizens and journalists. They also used analyses of satellite and ground-level images, like smoke clouds, shadows and impact craters. This led to a map of the artillery strike.

5.3 LESSON 3

The third lesson had a split focus, with a discussion about the concept of space including examples of global artworks on the one hand, and a theoretical semiotic reading of an art video on the other hand. The homework for this lesson again involved a walk during which students had to collect material as explained above.

The lesson started with a talk with the whole group, with each pair sharing their experiences of doing the homework assignment. They talked about the walks and the rules they gave each other. There were many examples of how they had reacted on each other's work. For instance, one student used a photo taken by the partner student and added a drawing to it using the shapes already there (see Fig. 11). Not many students linked their walking experiences to Walter Benjamin's text.

After the talks, Orly and Manon gave a presentation on global artworks using spaces like walks, trails and routes as a subject. Examples included Francis Alÿs' *Fairy Tales* (Fig. 12), in which his sweater is snagged somewhere in a city and unravels to a thread as he walks, leaving a trail. Another example was English artist Hamish Fulton's *Walking Journey* (Fig. 13). Fulton's artworks are walks and descriptions of these walks in photos and maps, which are exhibited in a gallery space. The talk was meant to provide the students with inspiration for their final work.

Following a break, the students went into breakout rooms, where they watched and discussed a video by the research group Forensic Architecture on the 2014 Gaza bombing (Fig. 14). Forensic Architecture is an interdisciplinary team of researchers that includes architects, filmmakers, lawyers and scientists. They research areas impacted by human rights violations. When discussing this video once everyone had returned to the main space in Teams, the students were asked to react to the way Forensic Architecture collect data and how they could connect that to their own projects, and what they thought about taking various points of view in space and time to research a certain spatial phenomenon. During the discussion, the subject of the video, the Gaza bombing, was addressed rather carefully in relation to the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Feelings in the group became tense during this discussion,

with the Dutch students expressing amazement about the reality of war and the Israeli students expressing discomfort about the choice of this subject.

The lesson ended with a question to the students about how they would like to exhibit their final work in collaboration. It was decided to create a new Padlet area dedicated solely to the final works. The students would have three weeks to make a final work, or collection of works, based on their collaboration and the material collected in the previous lessons. The choice of media of this final work or works was left completely open.

5.4 LESSON 4

The fourth lesson was dedicated to the final online exhibition. The students uploaded their final works prior to the start of this lesson. The final works were made in collaboration between the student pairs based on their experiences together and the material collected in the previous lessons. After a short opening, each pair had fifteen minutes to present their work. Each presentation was followed with questions asked by the teachers and other students.

The final works showed a diverse approach in the way the students had collaborated and had understood the subjects discussed in the lessons. For example, one student pair had combined the

spaces they photographed by merging them to create a new image (Fig. 15). Others did not base their final work on the work they had collected in the homework assignments, but instead focused on the contact they had together. One student pair made a split screen video in which each of them brought along a life-size cardboard cut-out of each other's portrait on their day's venture (Fig. 16). Another student pair did base their work on the material collected from the homework, but presented it in an online exhibition space that the viewer could walk through virtually (Fig. 17). The fourth lesson ended with a celebratory toast online (Fig. 18).

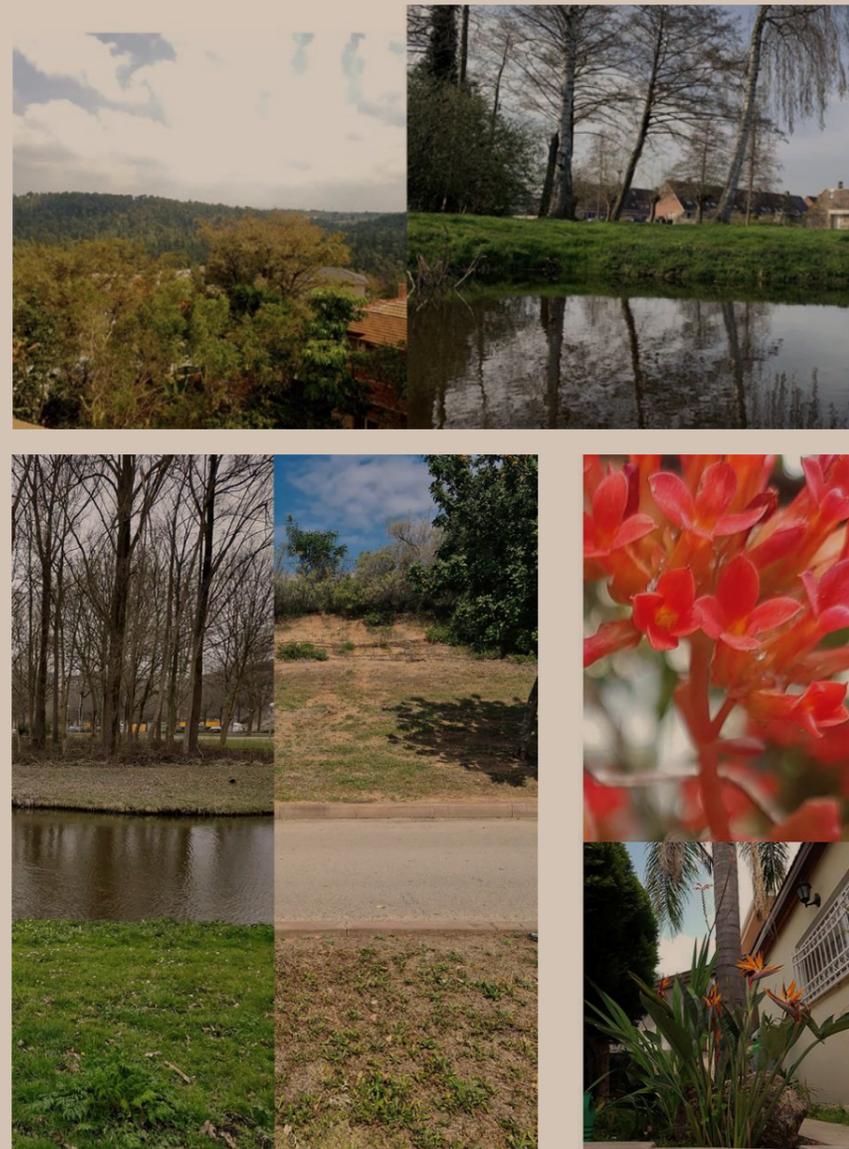


Figure 15. Example of students' final work with combined photographs of the spaces where the students live.



Figure 16. Example of students' final work that focuses on the contact they had with each other, featuring a split screen video made to look as if they had visited each other for a day.



Figure 17. Students' final work for which they created an online gallery space the viewer can walk through virtually, visiting several rooms with works presented on the walls.



Figure 18. The fourth lesson ended with a celebratory toast online.

5.5 EVALUATION OF THE STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE COURSE

In this section, we will discuss the data from the learner reports and the group interviews. All sixteen participating students filled in a learner report and participated in the group interviews. The results are analysed below based on the categories derived from the design principles. The data have been divided deductively into categories from our design principles by open thematic coding. In addition, material from online lessons, such as chats in Teams and student works made during the lessons, has been used as examples to support our analyses.

Pedagogical strategies

Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties from at least two different countries, in which teachers work together as a team.

Both groups stated that they found the pilot course to be a positive experience. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they particularly appreciated being able to meet new people from a different country. It revived their energy for online learning, especially because collaboration was essential since they live in different countries. The students noted that they felt this less in other online lessons designed by their faculties for the Covid-19 lockdown.

A couple of times, students remarked about being taught by an international teaching team in the interview. Some Dutch students perceived differences in teaching between Dutch and Israeli teachers: the latter took more time for silences after asking questions so that there was more time for thinking and finding out the concepts behind an idea. An Israeli student mentioned that she liked seeing how we as an international teaching team designed and taught the lessons together, and that she experienced the teachers as a unified team. Some students mentioned an imbalance in how often one of the four teachers presented online, for instance, to explain theory by means of a PowerPoint presentation, while another said "I felt the four of you were very united, coming from the same place" (Israeli student).

There was a difference in perception regarding the online platforms used. The Dutch students

were already accustomed to Teams and did not mention any difficulties regarding its usability, while the Israeli students were using Teams for the first time and experienced some issues with video conferencing, navigating the platform, etc. It is interesting that the way video conferencing was used revealed differences in culture between the two faculties. One Israeli student commented: "In terms of culture, we were all surprised that we needed to raise our hand [in an online class]. Then I got used to raising a hand." And another person added: "It was amazing how the hand-raising was not talked about. We understood this during the lesson and very quickly everyone adopted it." Padlet worked well as an online platform to share assignments. All the students had used Padlet before and felt that this tool worked well as an online exhibition space.

Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties where students from two different countries work in pairs and engage in peer learning.

Besides Teams and Padlet, students started communicating via WhatsApp. The Israeli students were used to starting WhatsApp groups when enrolling in a course, while the Dutch students were a little more hesitant to start communicating this way, but that quickly changed. One Israeli student said in the interview: "In general, when we wanted to open a general group on WhatsApp, there was a sense that they were wary of giving their phone number. We had to establish a certain intimacy to work up to the WhatsApp stage." The Dutch students did not mention not wanting to open a general group with all students in this course; they only mentioned that they did communicate via WhatsApp and FaceTime during the collaboration.

Since the course was in English, some students mentioned their experiences with language. An Israeli student said: "It was very helpful when you added words in Hebrew, difficult words. They also sometimes added words in Dutch. It helped a lot." In contrast, some Dutch students said they were pleasantly surprised by how well they could communicate and participate in English. Generally, none of the students said they were hindered by a language barrier.

Other students mentioned the different ways of creating work they discovered while working together in pairs. Some Dutch students

commented on differences in approaching an assignment and starting a creative process:

"Even though we had the same subject/rule/assignment, we approached it very differently and therefore encouraged each other to work in a different way as well. I noticed that we were slowly moving towards an outcome which showed both our assets and try-outs. This is a way of working I've never done before and a very interesting experiment" (Dutch student).

Another Dutch student commented on working together: "And then I worked with X and he was a bit more free in my opinion. [...] I also thought I noticed from other Israeli students, that they were very free in the creative process and that they worked very associatively and intuitively. I also liked that, and I learned a lot from that." A few Israeli students made comments about expectations about working together not always matching up, for instance: "I felt some sort of a gap in depth. Both in terms of content and in creating together. Some kind of feeling that they are not quite in the same mindset - in terms of diving into things."

The discussions the students had with each other, apart from the group, revealed issues about assumptions concerning the other country. One Dutch student reflected on a conversation she had with an Israeli student:

"On the one hand, a bit painful because I still catch myself having some white privilege, you know, and you just have a Western life and everything is easy anyway. And I mean, I have problems too and I feel totally lost sometimes too [...]. [...] but I do have clean water, I don't even think about that anymore, you know, and I found that very confrontational but also important. A confrontation that I really needed" (Dutch student).

Both the Israeli and Dutch students said they would have liked to be able to work in larger groups, because they would have had the opportunity to meet more foreign students that way.

Create learning activities based on guided conversation, group discussions and making artworks in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness.

With regard to the art theory assignments used in this course, some students emphasised how the work of Walter Benjamin inspired them:

"Thanks to *The Flaneur* I realised that I need to look around me more, everything can be like the beginning of an idea that will lead to something else and so on. Everything can be created, and everything leads to a new place" (Israeli student)

All students agreed that the combination of theory and art practice in this pilot course was balanced and that the theory helped them to get a sense of direction in the way their practice needed to go. "The combination of subject-matter content through literature, and also the possibility to create ourselves has made me aware that I want to continue to combine these two, in both teaching and creating my own work" (Dutch student).

Both Dutch and Israeli students mentioned several times that they became aware of each other's personal and cultural concepts while collaborating on assignments to create work together. Some students spoke of similarities they had discovered in these experiences, for example: "Maybe I thought there would be some differences in culture [...] but I just got the impression that our lives are very similar [...] so I didn't really have the idea that we had very different rights and stuff" (Dutch student).

All the students mentioned that that they would have liked to have more assignments with the whole group together. One Israeli student commented: "I think it was pretty balanced. The only thing was, if it [the course] was longer, then it would be nice to give exercises with more 'duration' and more time to learn them together. More exercises that are completely together..." In the group interviews, both Israeli and Dutch students said they would have liked the course to be six to eight lessons instead of four. That way they would have been able to discuss more artworks in art appreciation assignments and would have been able to get to know more students from the other faculty on a deeper level.

Content matter

For art appreciation assignments, use contemporary global artworks that contain personal stories or local memories, which may trigger feelings of discomfort.

When asked which artworks made them think and discuss cultural concepts in the learner reports, all the students said that they learned about each other through art appreciation

assignments. Erez Israeli's work *Friday night* (2009) was mentioned a lot in the interviews as an example of an artwork that made cultural concepts apparent. After learning its relevance to the Holocaust and the Jewish custom of Friday night's Shabbat dinner, most Dutch students said that they had interpreted this work incorrectly. The only exception was one student from Germany (who studies at the Breitner Academy). He mentioned "I saw it coming that it was about the Holocaust, because in Germany, for example, at our school, we also have a lot of works that ultimately have to do with the Holocaust, and I expected it because of that train." Some Israeli students said in the interview that they felt uncomfortable talking about Erez Israeli's work because of the reference to their culture and history. Others felt at ease talking about the artwork and their cultural background. "I think differently, unlike X, of the work Friday. It's from a personal place. I come from a traditional home and Friday night dinners are really significant for us [...] I felt that this was how he [the Dutch student] somehow understood what Friday night dinner was for me" (Israeli student).

Interestingly, when reviewing the use of global artworks in the interview, one Dutch student had an interpretation of the way people look at art. "I sometimes caught myself interpreting art in a very Western way." This remark shows the assumption that people from different parts of the world have different ways of looking at art. By mentioning her way of looking, she shows a bias towards a Western way of looking, presumably the 'correct' way of interpreting art.

Both Dutch and Israeli students were critical about our choice of artworks in this course. They felt there was too much emphasis on 'Middle Eastern' artworks and less on 'Dutch' artworks. "Maybe some of ours [artworks about our culture] too, because I miss that now. It was now very much of the same with those films, a bit more in line with their culture [...]" (Dutch student). For some Israeli students, this feeling of imbalance was felt quite strongly:

"[...] focusing on the Israeli side was difficult without a Dutch counter-response. In my opinion you need to either bring works that are balanced to both sides or bring works that are not related to either side. It's nice to bring political art, but it's quite complex not to balance it" (Israeli student).

In both the learner reports and the interviews, the Israeli and Dutch students valued the way Forensic Architecture used research and data (for instance, from public surveillance cameras) to create a work. However, Israeli students found this artwork put too great an emphasis on the political situation in the Middle East for them, as illustrated by this comment by an Israeli student: "By the way, the choice of the video about the Architects was a bit difficult. After watching the video, I felt the need to defend ourselves."

Use a visual semiotic reading with open questions as a tool for interpreting artworks in art appreciation assignments.

A semiotic reading of artworks discussed in the course was indicated by the use of associative words, mentioned by both Israeli and Dutch students. In the learner reports and in the interviews, students mentioned that they did not recognise making semiotic readings. When asked "how did a semiotic reading help you understand works of art?" both groups fell silent at first. Then they generally provided negative answers: "If I don't remember, then probably not" (Israeli student).

However, during the course, students linked the connection between the artworks and their personal associations with words like "this reminds me of" or "I remember." Remarks like these were used frequently throughout the four lessons. A good example of this is a Dutch student in the Lesson 4 chat, in which she said: "The bars the stick went against reminded me of prison and that in relation to when you are lost in a city [...]" (see Fig. 7). In this example, two semiotic associations are made to Alj's video by the use of the words "reminded me of." The first is the bars of the fence being associated with prison, and the second is the rhythm and walking in the video being associated with Benjamins text...wandering in a city...being lost in a city.

Also, during the interviews, students used words that indicated that they had made associative semiotic interpretations of artworks, and sometimes students specifically mentioned taking a different perspective on artworks: "I think it also forces you to put certain glasses on, a different perspective, which leads to many different outcomes" (Dutch student). Here, the student did not mention the association she made, but indicated her train of thought in developing different perspectives. This path, which

led to interpretation of the artworks, is described as "putting certain glasses on." The glasses are a semiotic reading of interpretation, meaning different ways of looking or different ways of interpretation. At other times, students mentioned the association without indicating that it was an association: "I also saw the different sides of a battle doing the same thing as a ritual for battle" (Dutch student). The word 'ritual' in this case is the semiotic connotation to the video of Alj's *Doing is Undoing* in which soldiers assemble their rifles. The split screen of two people doing the same thing is then interpreted as a ritual (Fig. 9).

The Dutch students said they learned a lot from the Israeli students, while the Israeli students said they thought the discussion shallow. One Dutch student said she found the discussion about Forensic Architecture (Fig. 14) interesting and rich in association:

"I noticed that I could talk about it with X for a long time [...] we often wandered off in all the conversations and then we started talking about everything. On this topic we really just stayed the full time we had, in that breakout room, we were talking about that. I don't know, I just thought it was really interesting" (Dutch student).

On the other hand, an Israeli student said about the same artwork that he felt pushed into the subject because there was a difference in the depth of the conversation, as the Dutch students did not associate enough or reveal enough about themselves.

"I was not interested in leading the discourse in this direction, but I felt that this was what I was expected to talk about. Same with the Architects in Gaza ... Francis Alj's was excellent. It did mediate the idea, but in our 'inner courtyard' - a lot of shit happens here. And it was a little tough. Again, there was a contrast between what we reveal and what they reveal" (Israeli student).

6. Reflection phase, conclusions

In this design-based research project, the following research questions were taken as a central focus: *Which design principles are needed for the pedagogy and the content matter of an online intercultural art appreciation course?* and *What are the participants' experiences and perceived learning outcomes with the design principles of the online intercultural art appreciation course?* In this chapter, we will first describe our conclusions regarding the most important learning outcomes of this pilot course, in relation to the course's design principles. Based on those insights, we will formulate a definitive set of design principles for an online art appreciation course in which the primary focus is on intercultural learning. Finally, we will describe the caveats/marginal notes and possibilities for further research.

6.1 MAIN EXPERIENCES AND PERCEIVED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE PARTICIPANTS WITH THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Pedagogical strategies: Team teaching

Working online with teachers from different faculties in different countries, in this case Israel and the Netherlands, led to team teaching where each teacher could contribute ideas and didactic approaches based on their own expertise. We all contributed content in order to create rich content matter and variety in didactic approaches. This was done, for instance, by combining several theoretical subjects in the online lessons, such as the concept of space and the theory of Walter Benjamin, and through art reception assignments about interpreting global artworks and by having students make works in collaboration. Students recognised this and stated that they found that we presented ourselves as a team. They also commented on the way of teaching. Dutch students said Israeli teachers took more time for silences

after asking questions and took more time to find out the concepts behind an idea. Some Israeli students mentioned an imbalance in how often one of the four teachers presented online.

The collaboration of teachers in our team consisted of teachers with theoretical expertise and teachers with artistic expertise. This led to content matter and working process in which practical and theoretical approaches were equally emphasised.

Pedagogical strategies: peer learning

The data showed that working in pairs did indeed stimulate to peer learning. However, feedback from the Israeli and Dutch students in the interviews showed they would also have liked to work with different students than just those in their pair. A good mix of collaboration in pairs and larger collaborative groups, as well as working together with the whole group, could enhance the dynamics of assignments and give students the opportunity to get to know many students from the other country, thus making the learning experience more diverse.

Therefore, having students collaborate with a wide variety of students in the group and varying the group structure could potentially enhance the learning experience of students. In addition, the dynamics in group atmosphere could be boosted by having students work with several other students instead of one.

Pedagogical strategies: learning activities that stimulate cultural awareness

Learning activities, such as group discussions and guided conversations, only led to cultural awareness concerning subjects that had a direct link to the countries and cultures of the participating students. Examples of these subjects are religious practices and political situations. Learning activities in which students made works in collaboration contributed to cultural awareness in a more practical manner because they shed light on the different ways students were accustomed to working and on variations in the way they were taught. This included differences in starting a creative process and deciding when a work was finished.

The combination of theoretical and practical content matter intensified the peer learning experience on different levels. On the one hand, students discussed works in pairs, and on the other, they made works together in pairs, which was of course also discussed in group discussions. This led to cultural awareness on different levels; not only regarding how they understood the artworks and their contexts, but also how they understood the differences between the others' ethos and habits and their own.

The data from the interviews, with both the Israeli and the Dutch students, showed that they would have liked the course to be longer than four lessons. Regarding the complexity of the intercultural exchange process, the course could be stretched from four to six or even eight lessons. This would give students more time to reflect on and understand cultural similarities and differences. A longer course would also make it easier to let students collaborate with a wide variety of participating students.

Many assumptions about cultural awareness were expressed during the final interviews, which we conducted after the course had ended. We chose to conduct these interviews in the students' first language with teachers and students from the same faculty. The data showed that

this created a safe environment, which made it possible for students to speak freely about their feelings, assumptions and considerations regarding cultural awareness. Course evaluations could be done in a similar manner.

Content matter: global artworks that trigger discomforting emotions

The selection of artworks that could trigger a 'pedagogy of discomfort' by addressing difficult issues and troubling the participants' emotional comfort zones (Boler, 1999, 2004; Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas & Boler, 2002) was best met with artworks with a strong political or cultural reference, such as works by Forensic Architecture and by Erez Israeli. These works were easily linked to the political situation of Israel and led to discussions in the group and between the collaborating pairs. Artworks that did not have a direct connection to political situations or religious practises did not trigger feelings of discomfort, and seemed to have a lower impact on the mutual intercultural learning process.

Our data from the interviews, with both the Israeli and the Dutch students, showed that the choice of artworks was imbalanced. There were fewer artworks from a European or Dutch point of view that addressed Dutch or European political situations, religion or cultural practices. This forced the Israeli students to explain (or defend) themselves more and hindered the mutual exchange with Dutch students and their culture.

Furthermore, the choice of content matter was experienced as rich by both students and teachers. This rich content matter was a result of the team teaching, with each participating teacher contributing subjects based on their expertise. In our case, this was a wide variety of global artworks, the semiotic approach for interpretation of works, the concept of space from an artist's or maker's point of view, and the philosophical texts by Walter Benjamin.

Content matter: art appreciation with a semiotic reading of artworks.

Semiotic reading was an underlying tool and embedded in our didactic approach, which focused on exchange of thought. Although students did not notice or recognise the use of semiotics, inviting students to make associations and

explain them to each other during the lessons proved that the use of semiotics was successful, because associations and interpretations were indeed made frequently during the four lessons. While the choice of a semiotic reading is effective in the interpretation of artworks, it does not necessarily trigger cultural awareness. The students addressed cultural awareness only when the chosen artworks were about a cultural or political subjects.

6.2 THE FINAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

To formulate final design principles that are appropriate for an online art appreciation course with student art teachers in an intercultural setting, we conducted an empirical study in which we tested and analysed data obtained from learner reports and interviews. The data analysis confirmed that the five design principles were relevant, and helped us give them more detail and depth in the form of additional guidelines. The final design principles and these new guidelines are visualised in Fig. 19.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES	GUIDELINES
Pedagogical strategies:	
<i>Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties from at least two different countries, in which teachers work together as a team.</i>	Use the expertise of the participating teachers to create rich content matter and variety in didactic approaches.
<i>Form an international online learning community between two or more art education faculties where students from two different countries work in pairs and engage in peer learning.</i>	Let students collaborate with a wide variety of students from the other participating faculties. Let students vary in collaborating with pairs, larger groups and as a whole group. Vary the group structure to enhance peer learning and bring dynamics to assignments.
<i>Create learning activities based on guided conversation, group discussions and making artwork in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness.</i>	Stimulate cultural awareness by creating learning activities based on guided conversations and group discussions with topics linked to the participants' cultures and countries. Let students make work in collaboration to stimulate cultural awareness. Stimulate cultural awareness by choosing an online environment as a neutral learning space where students from different countries and faculties meet. Reflect on cultural awareness by choosing to hold conversations in the students' first language without students from the other countries present.
Content matter:	
<i>For art appreciation assignments, use contemporary global artworks that contain personal stories or local memories, which may trigger feelings of discomfort.</i>	For art appreciation assignments, use artworks with political, religious and cultural references to trigger discomforting emotions from the viewer's perspective. Choose artworks that are linked to the country or culture of the participating students. Choose a balanced number of artworks from each participating country or culture in the course, with political, religious and/or cultural references. Create rich content matter for a variety of assignments, both theoretical and practical.
<i>Use a visual semiotic reading with open questions as a tool for interpreting artworks in art appreciation assignments.</i>	Use a semiotic reading to interpret artworks as an underlying tool connected to didactics that focus on exchange of thought. Invite students to explain associations to each other. Use myths to discuss assumptions about the other to create cultural awareness.

Figure 19. Final design principles and guidelines for an online intercultural art appreciation course.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This design-based research project was meant for a collaboration between two universities situated in different countries with different cultural backgrounds. The most important outcome is that having students from different countries work together in a rich learning environment in which they discuss global artworks was found by students to be an important intercultural learning experience.

One important insight is that students found the online lessons to be useful because the other students were physically far away. The Dutch students mentioned having more energy for these online lessons because the other students lived in Israel. Also, meeting students and teachers from another country and university made the atmosphere in the lessons adventurous. Working with more universities abroad could create a rich online learning community. This could lead to a variety of different approaches, theories, didactics and interpretations.

Through this project we discovered that combining theoretical lessons with practical lessons made students reflect on both in more depth. At the Breitner Academy, art theory and art practice are often taught as separate subjects. It would be interesting to investigate what possibilities exist for lessons in which theory and art practice are combined to create a more versatile and diverse learning environment.

Finally, we would like to further research the possibilities of art reception assignments with a pedagogy of discomfort in combination with suitable contemporary artworks, where students discuss cultural awareness. We would like to do this both in our courses at the Breitner Academy and in a follow-up version of the pilot course in collaboration with Hamidrasha, which will take place in the spring of 2023.

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APPENDIX 1 – LEARNER REPORT

Dear students,

Thank you for participating in our online pilot “Between Spaces, we use words and think in images”. Please, complete the form below.

This form (Learner Report) will be used in an evaluation of the pilot. Please send it back before April 13th to: claire.goedman@ahk.nl

I am a student at the faculty of H’Amidrasha()

I am a student at the faculty of Breitner Academy ()

Part 1: open questions

Question 1 General

What learning experiences did you have in this course?

Write down as many experiences as possible.

Examples:

I have noticed, discovered that.....

I have learned how....

I have understood that.....

Write down as many sentences on meaningful experiences in this box:

1..

2...

3....

Question 2 About yourself

What did you learn about yourself in this course?

Write as many learning sentences as apply to you as possible

What meaningful insights did you have during this course about yourself?

Write down as many meaningful insights as possible.

Example:

– I have noticed/seen/experienced/felt that I

– I have learned that I....

Write down as many sentences on meaningful experiences in this box:

1..

2...

3....

Part 2: closed questions

Please mark your answer with an “x” on the scale next to the question. Double + indicates that you totally agree, double – means you totally disagree.

	totally disagree		totally agree
	--	-	+ ++
3. I experienced the teaching team as a united team			
4. Being taught by an intercultural teaching team didn't have added value to me as a student			
5. Being in a course with intercultural students was a meaningful learning experience to me			
6. I experienced difficulties in communication with the other students due to a language barrier			
7. The different learning activities in the course made personal cultural concepts apparent to me			
8 My personal cultural concepts were not reflected in the learning activities			
9. The chosen artworks showed a personal story or local memory from the point of view of the artist			
10. The chosen artworks did not stimulate me to discuss about the meaning of the artworks			
11. While discussing the artworks a semiotic reading for interpreting art was not meaningful to me			
12. While discussing the artworks I used personal myths and symbols to interpret these artworks			

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEWS

Questions on April 22

Vered and Orly will talk for one hour with the Israeli students.
 Manon and Claire will talk to the Dutch students for one hour, both in native language. Both groups will be asked the same questions, goal will be to get more in depth information and specific examples on the topics and issues that were raised in the learner reports;
 With each question students will be asked to answer them concerning the lesson in the whole group and in conversation in pairs.

Culture:
 What was similar between the two nationalities and what was different, in relation to working and creating together, which dilemmas came up? Can you name specific examples?
 How did you experience being thought by four teachers in an international teaching team?

Art(works):
 Which of the artworks we discussed in class and in pairs made you think about differences in cultures, give examples.

Learning activities:
 How do you look back on the balance between art reception assignments and practical assignments? (balance theory/ practice)?

Follow up/ continuation:
 If we would continue the course what would be the next step?
 Would you be interested in making some kind of collaboration exhibition together in the next couple of weeks?

BIOGRAPHIES

Claire Goedman, MA studied Cultural Studies at the University of Amsterdam and earned her teaching qualification for secondary education, first level. After several years teaching art history and CKV (cultural and artistic education) at a secondary school in Amsterdam, she started teaching at the Breitner Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts, where she is a lecturer of Cultural History and Global Art. She also supervises student research projects and is the head of the Breitner Academy's curriculum committee.

Manon Habekotté, MA studied Art History at the University of Leiden and earned her teaching qualification for secondary education, first level. After several years teaching art history and CKV (cultural and artistic education) at a secondary school in Amsterdam, she started working as a lecturer of Art History and Global Art at the Breitner Academy of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. She also supervises student research projects and is a member of the Board of Examiners of the Breitner Academy.

COLOFON

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Art appreciation lessons as platform
for intercultural exchange

by
Claire Goedman and Manon Habekotté

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